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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 KAMPALA 000727

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SUBJECT: NORTHERN UGANDA NOTES (April 7-30, 2007)

1. (U) Summary: Post presents the eighteenth edition of Northern Uganda Notes to provide information on the situation on the ground and USG activities aimed at meeting Mission's objectives in northern Uganda. These objectives include promoting regional stability through peace and security, good governance, access to social services, economic growth, and humanitarian assistance. Post appreciates feedback from consumers on the utility of this product and any gaps in information that need to be filled. End Summary.

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PEACE AND RECONCILIATION PROCESSES
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2. (U) On April 15, U.N. Special Envoy for LRA-Affected Areas Joaquim Chissano briefed the diplomatic corps on the progress made in his meetings with the LRA. Chissano described a perceptible change during the April 13 and 14 meetings in the demeanor of the LRA leadership from his previous encounters with Joseph Kony and Vincent Otti in March. In the past, the LRA leaders and fighters were all dressed in combat fatigues. However, during these meetings the two leaders were dressed in matching suits and ties and other LRA members wore safari suits.

3. (U) The GOU and LRA agreed to extend the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement to June 30. LRA members in southern Sudan and northern Uganda would be allowed to cross the Nile River to assemble at Rikwangba. The GOU offered to transport the LRA to the assembly area, but the LRA refused, preferring that its members travel on foot. Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, and South Africa would each provide two observers for the negotiations. The Democratic Republic of Congo did not send a representative with the team on this visit because the previous individual had been replaced. Liaison officers would be posted to a town close to the assembly area to facilitate the movement of LRA fighters and communication between Rikwangba and Juba.

4. (U) On April 25, the eve of the resumption of talks, LRA deputy commander Vincent Otti participated in a local radio talk show with UPDF spokesman Felix Kulayigye. Otti stated that the LRA delegates were in Juba for the talks. He demanded more financial facilitation and improved security for the delegation, designation of the safe corridors for the LRA in southern Sudan to assemble, and the lifting of the International Criminal Court (ICC) warrants. Otti also stated that he believed that all LRA members were going to be indicted by the ICC. Talk show presenters, who have had interactions with Otti for the past three years, were concerned that Otti was spreading that rumor to try to unify the LRA rank-and-file. Listeners raised concern that Otti's comments may have undone much of the groundwork laid by Chissano to change the negative dynamics

of the talks.

15. (SBU) USG Activities: Ambassador Browning and P/E Officer met with Walter Ochora, Resident District Commissioner for Gulu District on April 19. Ochora was traveling to the U.S. as part of the mass mobilization campaign being organized by Invisible Children to highlight the plight of displaced persons in northern Uganda. Ochora was part of the GOU team that met Kony and Otti on April 13 and 14. He also contacts them by phone on a regular basis to keep the parallel track open. When asked if he thought the LRA leaders were ready to negotiate, Ochora said that their body language was different than on any previous occasion. Ochora believes that the LRA leaders were beginning to feel guilty about their activities in northern Uganda and southern Sudan. Ochora said that a settlement with Kony and Otti was possible and that the two always ask "what do the Americans say?" He stated that during a photo opportunity, the LRA leaders changed into new Sudanese military uniforms. Although Ochora was optimistic about the resumption of the talks, he said that the LRA leaders remain unpredictable.

16. (SBU) On April 25, P/E Officer attended a briefing by the Government of Uganda delegation on the resumption of the peace talks. Government officials were optimistic that significant progress could be made on Agenda Item Three: Accountability and Reconciliation Mechanisms. When asked what the LRA leadership's bottom line was for an agreement to be reached, one member of the GOU team stated that Kony and Otti want to be able to live out their lives on a farm, in comfort, and with security. He stated that he believed that the LRA leaders understood that they will need to go before the Ugandan legal system and serve some type of a prison sentence.

17. (U) A representative of ConGen Juba attended the opening of the peace talks on April 26. Kampala-based diplomats also attended as a

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sign of support for the peace process. Chissano and Southern Sudanese President Salva Kiir chaired the opening session and urged the parties to negotiate in good faith. Kiir stated that the "stability of Uganda and that of southern Sudan are inseparable." He expressed concern that the war zone had shifted to southern Sudan and that the atrocities being committed by the LRA were discrediting the Government of South Sudan before the citizens of eastern and western Equatoria. The first session adjourned at approximately the same time an alleged LRA unit reportedly killed two civilians and injured a third at Kimoro Village in Magwi Country, Eastern Equatoria. Press reports indicate that the LRA demanded that the GOU remove it from international terrorists lists, and written assurances that the LRA delegation would receive facilitation, better security, and a framework for dealing with the ICC warrants during the opening of the peace talks.

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SECURITY UPDATE
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18. (U) On April 2, twelve Sudanese were killed and 14 people injured, including five Ugandans, in suspected LRA ambushes on three vehicles in southern Sudan. There also was a report that LRA rebels associated with Thomas Kwoyello may have raided Mugali village in Sudan, killing two persons and abducting five others.

19. (U) The Ugandan military reported a clash between the LRA and UPDF in Eastern Equatoria, southern Sudan, on April 19 that left one Ugandan soldier dead.

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HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND ECONOMIC RECOVERY
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110. (U) Two hundred landmines and unexploded ordnance were destroyed in Gulu and Amuru districts over the past two months, according to the National Mine Action program team. The presence of landmines and unexploded ordnance has hindered resettlement of internally-displaced persons in some areas. The team is clearing areas near satellite camps, trading and health centers, and

schools.

¶11. (SBU) USG Activities: Democracy and Governance Advisor and P/E Chief met with U.S.-funded non-governmental organizations concerned about GOU statements that it was investigating NGOs. They reported that the Resident District Commissioner in Lira announced that some NGOs may be "blacklisted" when it came time to re-register with the Government. To date, no U.S.-funded NGOs have been targeted, but are concerned about negative remarks made by local officials on the radio. The proliferation of NGOs in northern Uganda, some of which do not keep the GOU informed of their activities, has contributed to confusion over what resources are available for development activities. The scrutiny of the NGOs is one part of a poorly coordinated GOU strategy to get a better understanding of what is being done by NGOs. The GOU is using the re-registration exercise to get that information from NGOs that have not reported activities to local officials. Another underlying dynamic that bears watching is an ongoing struggle between the central and local governments over resources. Local government leaders have complained that the Prime Minister's Office, in charge of the Northern Uganda Peace, Development, and Recovery Plan, was trying to deny local districts funds if NGOs were providing those services.

¶12. (U) USAID's Peace Support Team Advisor attended the Joint Monitoring Commission meeting on April 27. Regarding the issue of a Humanitarian Coordinator, Ugandan Foreign Minister Sam Kutesa told participants that the emergency phase of operations in northern Uganda was winding down and that Uganda was working in line with the UN reform program. At this point, there was no need for a humanitarian coordinator, according to the Foreign Minister.

¶13. (U) CARE International commissioned two USAID-funded motorized water systems on April 19 and announced it would be drilling 15 boreholes and rehabilitating 30 more, and constructing 27 latrines in selected schools.

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FROM THE MEDIA AND THE WEB
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¶14. (U) The Uganda Conflict Action Network (Uganda CAN) founders Michael Poffenberger and Peter Quaranto are planning to launch a new organization, Resolve Uganda, "to build public pressure for the

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necessary political leadership." In an April 19 newsletter, Poffenberger and Quaranto wrote to listserve recipients, "we know that the neglect we see from our leaders will be overcome only when enough people who care unite their resolve to achieve change." They drew a comparison between the tragedy of the shootings at Virginia Tech and continued suffering in northern Uganda, quoting poet Nikki Giovanni's memorial service remark that "No one deserves a tragedy." Quaranto's op-ed piece, "A Second Chance for Peace in Uganda," was published by the New Vision on April 16. Hailing the restart of the Juba talks on April 26, Quaranto argued that one of the lessons learned from the first round of talks was that lack of involvement of "several influential actors, including the United States government" had "perpetrated" mistrust between the government of Uganda and the LRA. According to Quaranto "greater regional and international engagement not only would bring leverage but also build confidence."

¶15. (U) Meanwhile, Human Rights Watch on April 25 released a statement from New York welcoming the resumption of the Juba talks, but emphasizing that "the negotiations must seek an outcome that also ensures fair and credible prosecutions for the most serious crimes in northern Uganda." The statement quotes HRW's International Justice Program Director, Richard Dicker, as stating that "Impunity would only help fuel future abuses in Uganda. By painting the ICC as an obstacle to peace, the LRA leaders have been trying to turn reality upside down." According to the HRW statement, the UN Security Council could postpone the ICC's investigation or prosecution for 12 months under article 16 of the ICC statute, but HRW believes such a move would be a mistake. "In the absence of credible alternatives at the national level, a deferral would shield LRA leadership from prosecution, perhaps

indefinitely if renewed. It could also open the door to dangerous interference by the Security Council in the judicial operations of the ICC."

BROWNING